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SERMON CCLIV.

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THE SINNER HIS OWN DESTROYER.

EZEKIEL, xxxiii. 11.—*As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

The word death is used with some variety of signification in the sacred Scriptures. In some places it denotes the separation of the soul from the body. It is then called temporal death—in others, it expresses the separation of the soul from purity and holiness, and from the favor of God in the present life. It is then denominated spiritual death—or a death “in trespasses and sins.” And in others still, it signifies the entire and everlasting abandonment of the soul by God to sin, misery, and ruin in the future world. This is eternal death.

The inquiry now before us is, which of these significations is to be applied to the death spoken of in the text? It certainly cannot refer to temporal death, since this is the destiny, alike of the righteous and the wicked. Neither can it be applied to spiritual death. For the death, spoken of in the text, is represented as being the effect of spiritual death, and not spiritual death itself. It must therefore signify eternal death—or the entire and everlasting abandonment of the soul by God, to sin, misery, and ruin, in the future world.

The text teaches us then, that *God has no pleasure in the eternal death of the wicked.*

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This is evident from what he has said, and from what he has done. It is manifest,

1. *From what God has said.* In the text, he has declared most explicitly, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. And this declaration is confirmed, too, by all the solemnities of an oath—"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." The same truth is also affirmed in the following passages from the word of God: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, *not willing that any should perish*, but that all should come to repentance." "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

The invitations of the Son of God, extended to impenitent sinners, accord most perfectly with the declarations which have now been presented. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say Come. And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Are all these explicit declarations and these encouraging invitations devoid of meaning? Is Jehovah insincere and heartless in those manifestations of feeling which are made, when he exclaims, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" Who is prepared to take upon himself the tremendous responsibility of charging God with insincerity? The conclusion then is inevitable, that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

But let us consider,

2. *What God has done in behalf of sinners.* Here we shall find still stronger evidence, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He has manifested his sincere desire for their eternal happiness, by plain and intelligible action.

God has shown in the very structure of the human soul, that he takes no delight in the sinner's destruction; else, why has he endowed man with conscience, which clearly distinguishes between right and wrong in human feeling and action; which marks out before him the path of duty, and secretly influences him to walk therein by its approving smile; while it warns him against entering upon the path of disobedience, by its admonitory voice? Else, why has he connected pleasurable emotions with the possession of benevolent feeling; while pain and misery follow the indulgence of malice and revenge? The entire influence of the action of our moral nature, is to involve in the deepest darkness

the pathway of sin, while it sheds the clearest light upon the pathway of holiness. But the pathway of sin leads downward to eternal death; while the pathway of holiness leads upward to everlasting life. God then has shown, by the very manner in which he has framed the human soul, that he takes no pleasure in the death of the sinner. In the remorse inflicted by a guilty conscience, in the misery consequent upon the indulgence of sinful passion, in the gloom and thick darkness which a course of transgression brings over the faculties and prospects of the soul, the voice of God may be distinctly heard, warning the sinner against walking in the broad road that leadeth to destruction. And on the other hand, in the peace and self-satisfaction occasioned by an approving conscience, in the pleasure resulting from the exercise of holy affection, in the clear and tranquil light which shines into the mind and along the path of him who is obedient to the divine commands, the voice of God may be as distinctly heard, inviting and encouraging the soul to enter the narrow way that leadeth to life.

But this is not all that God has done in our behalf. We have transgressed the divine law, and are consequently liable to eternal death. And yet, after we had thus exposed ourselves to endless ruin—even when we stood upon the crumbling brink of perdition, and were in momentary danger of falling to rise no more—the arm of God was extended to our aid. When the curses of a broken law were gathering above us, in one black cloud of vengeance, and were ready to descend in a dreadful tempest upon our unsheltered heads; then Jehovah interposed to shield us from the impending storm. He raised up in behalf of our ruined race a Redeemer, who is mighty to save. And through the broad and ample atonement for sin, which has been effected by the crucifixion of his own dear Son, he is “reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”

And in furtherance of this benevolent purpose, he has given us the means of reconciliation,—he has placed the Bible in our hands—he has given us his holy Sabbaths—he permits us to tread the courts of his earthly sanctuary—he has blessed us with the christian ministry—he has granted us the privilege of social and secret prayer. In addition to the gift of these means of grace, he sends down the Holy Spirit to render them efficacious in convincing the sinner of guilt, and in turning the soul to God through faith in a crucified Saviour.

God has done all these things in behalf of sinners, and they should be regarded in the light of so many obstacles, by which Jehovah has blocked up the avenues which lead to ruin. When conscience lifts up her voice of admonition, when the Bible publishes its precious promises

and its fearful threatenings, when it gives bright glimpses of heavenly felicity, or dreadful exhibitions of future woe, they should be looked upon as the direct exertions of God to save sinners from eternal misery. And, my impenitent hearers, you must surmount all these obstacles before you can seize on death. Yes, you must press your way through Bibles and Sabbaths, through the intercessions of saints and the entreaties of God's ambassadors; and that, too, while the Gospel remonstrates, while your conscience twinges at every step, and your ears ring with warnings, before you can go down to endless ruin.

Consider, also, my impenitent hearers, how much God has done for you as *individuals*, to deter you from misery, and to allure you to happiness. How often has he called upon you by the private conversation of some christian friend, by the reproofs of your own conscience, or by some merciful or afflictive dispensation of his providence, saying, "Why will ye die?" Doubtless his dealings have been very different with different individuals, having adapted his discipline to the varying characters, and habits, and circumstances of mankind. Upon some of you he has bestowed riches, and honors, and pleasures. He has strewn your path through life with the choicest and most fragrant flowers. He has seldom blighted your cheering hopes, or even darkened the sunshine of your present prosperity. On the contrary, he has loaded you with the most invaluable blessings. And he has done all this to allure you to himself by the strong principle of gratitude. Others of you have met with disappointment, have been reduced to poverty, have been defeated in the pursuit of honor and pleasure. And why have you been thus afflicted? Why, that finding no perfect and permanent enjoyment here, you might seek a resting-place for your deathless souls in the bosom of God. Perhaps disease has laid some of you on the bed of sickness. You were brought to the verge of the grave—to the borders of the eternal world. But God, infinite in kindness, removed from you his heavy-pressing hand, lengthened out your season of probation, and waited to see if you would heed the warnings of his voice. But I must leave you to follow out this subject by examining in detail your individual history.

Now I would ask, unless God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, why has he done so much to save them? Why has he so impressively taught us, by the very constitution of our moral nature, the inestimable value of holiness and the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Why did he make such costly provisions for our salvation as are contained in the Gospel, after we had ruined ourselves by transgression? Why does he encircle us with so many and such various means of grace? Why has he shed down upon us so abundantly the influences of his Spirit?

Why has he borne so long with us, notwithstanding our numberless and aggravated sins? Why has his indignation slumbered so long, while his mercy has been constantly following us in all our guilty wanderings from him, and inviting us with unequalled tenderness to return? Why was not his arm of vengeance long since uplifted, to strike the fatal blow that would blot us from the scroll of being, and banish us from the land of hope? The only satisfactory answer that can be given to these and the like questions is, that God takes no pleasure in the death of sinners. No: he takes no pleasure in their everlasting misery and ruin. He would prefer to have them turn and live. Good-will to men is the sum and substance of the Gospel dispensation. Such are the real feelings of God towards mankind. He is not willing that they should be doomed to an everlasting exile from his blissful presence. He feels for them more than parental solicitude and affection. And he says to them with unfeigned sincerity and tenderness, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?"

This subject suggests for our consideration the following reflections:

1. *God does not compel sinners to go down to ruin.* I know that many are disposed to question the truth of this statement. And the reason is, that they are unwilling to acknowledge that every thing in the way of their salvation is to be found in the aversion of their own hearts to the character and requirements of God. This unwillingness prevails extensively among those whose hearts have never been humbled into penitence and melted into contrition. They discover a strong inclination to exculpate themselves from guilt, even at the expense of casting the blame of their perdition upon Him who made them. Accordingly they will bring forward objections to silence the faithful warnings of friendship, and the stirring reproofs of conscience. At one time the decrees of God excuse them. At another their own inability to perform their duty exempts them from blame. And when they are told that no purpose of God compels men to sin, and that all their inability consists in an enmity of heart against the character and government of Jehovah, which involves the very essence of all guilt—still they continue to quiet the remonstrances of conscience, to cast the blame of their destruction upon their Maker; and thus they dishonor that God whom all the inhabitants of heaven adore, and whom they should love with the strength and fulness of undivided hearts.

But from the considerations advanced in this discourse we may learn that these sentiments are entirely erroneous. No, my impenitent hearers, God does not compel you to walk in the broad road that leadeth to destruction. He neither commands nor compels you to sin. Nay, he for-



bids your choice of sin. He commands you by all the weight of his awful authority to repent. Every step which you take in the road that leadeth to destruction, is taken directly in the face of all God's prohibitions, and threatenings, and entreaties. Every inch of your progress in the ways of sin, presses you harder and harder upon the point of his avenging sword; and unless God, in great mercy, had drawn it back, it would long since have pierced the vitals of your happiness. God, instead of urging you down to hell, has done every thing to allure you to heaven. He has presented before you the weightiest inducements to lead a life of faith and holiness. And remember that, if at last you sink into endless ruin, the throne of God will be entirely guiltless of the blood of your soul.

2. *Every sinner must turn from his evil ways, or he will finally perish.* This truth is implied in the text. Else, why does God call upon the wicked to turn from their evil ways and live? He knows that sin, if persisted in, will ruin the sinner; and therefore he urges him to abandon it for ever.

The same truth is *plainly* asserted in the word of God. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." I know that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Neither does he take any delight in sin. He compassionates the guilty; but he has no sympathy with guilt. It is that abominable thing which his soul hateth. And never will he permit the impenitent sinner to taste of the joys of heaven. His indignation will at last awake, and burn against the hardened transgressors of his law for ever and ever.

Nay, it is impossible to save from death the soul that continues in the love and the practice of iniquity. For sin, operating according to its own nature, will destroy the happiness of the spirit. It darkens the understanding, depraves the heart, corrodes the passions, and burdens the conscience. And how can a soul in such a condition be happy? How can it be otherwise than miserable? It contains within itself the causes of its misery, the materials and elements of its destruction. And it can be happy in no place while it remains in such a state. Place it, if you please, in the very paradise of God—let it behold all the glory of the Deity, and all the bliss experienced by the redeemed around the throne of the Eternal—let it gaze upon the verdant fields and the extended plains of the heavenly Canaan, and it will be wretched still. It is diseased by sin; and as well might you expect to restore to health a man pining away in sickness, in consequence of placing him in a stately pa-

lace, and surrounding him with worldly pomp and glory, as to cure in this way the sickness of the soul. It is dead in sin; and as well might you expect to raise a dead body to life, by having the glories of nature shine upon it, as to quicken into spiritual life and happiness a soul dead in sin, in consequence of its being surrounded by the glories of the upper world. The truth is, before a soul spiritually dead can be made susceptible of spiritual enjoyment, it must be raised to life. He, who raised the dead to life while here on earth, must quicken the soul, and raise it from the grave of trespasses and sins. The same Spirit that brooded over the watery elements at the creation, must hover over the elements of the soul, and out of the chaos of its troubled thoughts and feelings bring forth a new creation adorned with the "beauties of holiness." All this may now be done for the sinner. He lives under the redeeming economy of the Gospel, under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. And if, during the season of probation, he abandons sin, and returns to God and duty through faith in Christ, he may attain eternal life. But if his immortal interests are neglected till the period of his earthly trial close, he will sink down for ever in the abyss of misery and ruin.

3. *If impenitent sinners are eternally ruined, they are self-ruined.* God has declared, that he is willing to save every repenting sinner. He has made adequate provision in the Gospel to accomplish this object. He presses the offer of salvation upon the sinner in ten thousand forms. He has stationed a messenger of mercy at every turn and corner in the downward road to ruin, to call after the deluded sinner and entreat him to turn and live. And if he refuse to listen to these merciful invitations, if he will pursue with unyielding determination his dark and guilty course, he certainly can blame no one but himself when he finds himself overwhelmed with remediless destruction. Mansions of rest in heaven were offered to him for an everlasting habitation, but he preferred the path that led him to the prison of despair. Eternal life was placed within his reach, but he chose the way that leadeth to eternal death.

In concluding this discourse, permit me to ask you, my impenitent hearers, "Why will ye die?" Why will you ruin for ever all your bright and pleasant prospects? Why will you separate yourselves from God, the source and fountain of all happiness? Why will you destroy your own peace of mind and rush upon destruction, when apprised of your danger? O my friends, awake, I entreat you,—awake now, to your everlasting welfare. "As though God did beset thee by me, I pray you, in *Christ's* stead, be ye reconciled to God."

## SERMON CCLV.

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### THE DEVOTED PASTOR.

**I TIMOTHY, iv, 15.**—*Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them.*

The gift communicated to Timothy as a minister of Christ by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, involved relationships to God, to the church, and to the world, requiring all his time, talents, and efforts. In temporal pursuits, eminence and success can result only from unity of purpose and unyielding perseverance. In the sacred calling these qualifications are equally indispensable, and the want of them is ruinous if not unpardonable. The truths to be investigated; the active duties to be performed; the various dispositions and characters of men to be conciliated; the hope of usefulness; the claims of Christ; the overwhelming consequences connected with the ministry; and the solemn account to be rendered at the bar of God—separately and together, urge upon the christian minister “to give himself wholly to his work.”

I. The truths to be investigated are too vast and profound to be appreciated by a mind distracted with other and contending interests. The theological student must not linger among material scenes, nor stop to gather flowers in gardens of fancy. His spirit must nerve its wing to reach the pure source of created existences—the throne of God. The character, the plans of Jehovah, and the motives determining the immutable moral laws by which creatures and their actions are governed, constitute the medium of his contemplation upon the works of creation and of providence. Amidst the displays of infinite power and goodness pervading the universe, one object above the rest awakens his adoration; it is the cross of Jesus Christ. A crucified Saviour, seen by the eye of faith, renders other things, however august, comparatively insignificant. From the moment this world emerged into being, onward through eternity, by the rays emanating from Calvary, fresh glories are disclosed on every page of the divine operations. For the benefit of man, a worm, the stupendous scheme of redemption was devised. Mysteries here cluster



in boundless profusion to exemplify the perfections of the Deity, and at once to humble and enrich the fallen sinner.

Patient, prayerful research; diligence in comparing spiritual things with spiritual; and a vigor of mind which will not succumb to discouragement, are necessary to the profitable investigation of the Bible. As the miser values gold, and to acquire or preserve it passes sleepless nights, so the minister of Christ must obtain and retain a thorough knowledge of the Gospel by the cheerful exercise of indefatigable self-denial.

II. The *public and ACTIVE DUTIES* of the ministry require *entire devotion to the work*. The results of the study are to be communicated to the people. In preaching, acceptable words are to be sought out. Nothing perhaps is more difficult than to combine propriety above the censure of a refined taste, with a common phraseology understood by all. Of the style of the Bible, this characteristic is eminently predicable.

Our translation is considered a standard of the English language, and yet, among all classes, the expressions are familiar. The preacher who wishes to instruct his hearers will not fail to avail himself of its rich and simple variety.

The constant object in preaching, indeed, should be plainly and faithfully to exhibit the method and conditions of salvation. Every sermon ought to contain enough of truth to deprive the sinner of the excuse of ignorance, though it were the first and the last sermon he should ever hear.

People must be *visited*. In proportion to the direct application of truth, beneficial effects are usually realized. In private conversation we have closer access to the heart and conscience, than when the individual addressed is one among a multitude, as he has less opportunity of diverting the shaft by applying our remarks to others—a device of Satan which effectually counteracts all conviction of personal guilt and danger. A minister suitably impressed with the worth of souls will not fail to go from house to house, warning and persuading every man to be “wise for himself.” His interviews with his people will savor of the thrilling themes connected with his calling. When it is said *the minister is coming*, his object will be understood. Pastoral visitation, however, important as it is, when circumstances demand, must yield to the higher claims of the pulpit. The professing christian, who, for the pleasure of social intercourse with his pastor, would starve the congregation, to say the least, must be very selfish.

The sick and the dying must not be neglected; too often, alas! a painful duty. Standing by the death-bed of an impenitent sinner, whom we have repeatedly entreated to flee from the wrath to come, but who

has disregarded the expostulations of mercy, is an awful position. What remorse, what unavailing groans are the frequent accompaniments of such a scene! Writhing in the embraces of the king of terrors, the victim bewails the past and wails for the future—God slighted, Christ rejected, and the soul undone! And is there no redeeming counterpart to this frightful tragedy? Yes; the triumphant exit of a christian, to whom God, through Christ, gives the victory. In the dying believer, the excellency of the religion we preach shines out with unequalled lustre, and we retire from the spectacle rejoicing to consecrate ourselves wholly to the ministrations of that Gospel which is now felt to be the power of God unto salvation.

To the *rising generation* special regard is due. On the young mind a kind expression may leave an indelible impression. Seed sown in the spring-time quickens into verdure and produces an abundant harvest. The Sabbath-school has been called the nursery of the church. Blessed be God, it contains plants not only of pious parental instruction, but also from domestic circles where all religious culture would otherwise be neglected. Though a pastor may be prevented by other public duties from assisting personally in the Sabbath-school, the cause will be near his heart, and he will advance its prosperity by his prayers, his recommendations, and by his addresses to the pupils. With the exception of the Gospel ministry, no institution is more important; none whose downfall should be more earnestly deprecated. The libraries connected with the schools, if the selection be judicious, are a hallowed haven diffused through the whole community, "known and read of all."

Respect for the Saviour's last command, "to publish the Gospel to every creature," and a desire to appear at last among those who turn many to righteousness, can hardly fail to insure the co-operation of ministers in the *benevolent enterprises* of the age. From what other quarter, by what other instrumentality is deliverance to come? Shall we not be grateful to God for organizations enabling pastors confined to a particular charge, still to make their influence felt, through the benefactions of their people, to the ends of the world? Moving in their respective orbits, their attraction operates and their light shines through the whole system. In adopting a narrow selfish policy, the moral energies of a minister are prostrated, his views become more and more contracted, until, if he survives to advanced years, his solicitude converges to a point upon himself and his family,—*"what they shall eat, what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed,"*—an ambassador of God transformed into a shrivelled spectre of worldly anxiety.

III. THE VARIETY OF DISPOSITIONS AND CHARACTERS OF PERSONS TO

be conciliated, requires a knowledge not only of the prominent features, but of the minute shades of human nature—a knowledge attainable only by close observation, deep reflection, and long experience.

The lurking prejudices of early education and habits, and the views originating in the occupations and pursuits of life, are to be detected. In the feelings of unsuspecting youth, of busy manhood, and of decrepid age, the minister must sympathize, weeping with them that weep, and rejoicing with them that rejoice. Yet this spirit of accommodation, this wisdom of the serpent, is not to prevail at the expense of the harmlessness of the dove. Not an article of his divine commission may be compromised, nor an item of truth yielded to the adversary. For the purpose of exposing the hearts of individuals, the sagacity here referred to was often exhibited by the Saviour. Take for example the young man who had kept the whole law from his youth up: "Yet," said Christ, "one thing thou lackest; sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow me." By this simple application to the ruling passion, without a harsh word, the legalist's deficiency was disclosed. He went away sorrowful. So to call into exercise the pious emotions of the woman who besought the Lord to heal her daughter, at first he seemed not to notice her. As she continued her importunity he said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." This apparently cold repulse broke up the fountains of her religious sensibility, and her humility and faith flowed forth in the expression, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." The usefulness and success of a minister depend, in a great degree, under God, upon this nice adaptation of truth to characters.

IV. As a minister would hope for success, let him give himself wholly to his work. The divine blessing upon our labors is usually proportioned to our devotedness. From lips that kiss an idol, exhortations fall powerless; while a conviction on the part of an audience that their preacher counts all things but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, imparts weight to all he says and does. A faithful minister may doubtless have reason to mourn over the spiritual barrenness of his congregation; what else can an unfaithful minister expect? The example of one who resolves to know nothing but Christ and him crucified is a living sermon more powerful than words can express. To truth thus communicated, people cannot long remain indifferent. God gives increase to the planting and watering—not of Judas Iscariot, but of Paul and Apollos.

V. The remembrance of what CHRIST has endured to introduce on

earth the ministry of reconciliation, should prove an incitement to exclusive devotion in his service. Does the love of applause, of worldly honor, and of personal ease, tempt the minister to unfaithfulness? Let him visit the manger of Bethlehem and the cold mountains where at midnight his Master's prayers were offered; let him contemplate the Son of God sitting in the lowly habitations of poverty, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, often not having where to lay his head; let him mark the readiness of the Saviour to resist every clamorous demand of appetite, every impulse of nature, that he might please Him on whose errand of mercy he became incarnate and entered our world. Yet when duty called he could urge his passage through a host of foes. On his way to Jerusalem going up to suffer death, he went *before* his disciples, and in the garden of Gethsemane, where the vials of his Father's wrath against sin were poured upon his head, though shrinking humanity exclaimed, "let this cup pass from me," he added, "nevertheless, (how much that word meant!) "nevertheless,"—*notwithstanding all I endure, this bloody sweat, these excruciating agonies,—*" not *my* will, but *thine* be done." Through mockery and insult was he led to the execution, as a lamb to the slaughter; reviled and not reviling. As a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. From his first breath in the manger to his last gasp on the cross, his aim was one; and never did the expiatory victim start back from the altar. Shall such a Saviour be put off with half our heart or half our services? Has he not a claim to our whole heart, soul, strength, and mind? From the heights of Calvary there comes a voice, *Servant of the living God, minister of Christ, give thyself wholly to the work.*

VI. What infinite CONSEQUENCES are connected with the ministry? "We are," says the apostle, "a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish; to the one we are a savor of life unto life, and to the other a savor of death unto death. Who is sufficient for these things?" The minister of Christ deals with souls that are to exist through eternity. His labors are consummated in the bliss of heaven or in the miseries of hell. When time shall be no more, his name will be pronounced with gratitude or with execrations. Are such responsibilities to be thoughtlessly assumed or partially met?

VII. In view of the solemn ACCOUNT to be rendered at the bar of God, let the minister give himself wholly to his work. The day of judgment, to all an occasion of intense interest, will be peculiarly so to him who has been ordained to watch for souls. There will he meet the people of his charge, whether his ministrations contributed to their salvation or to their ruin. What an interview! Against the unfaithful

minister what allegations will be preferred. To redeem the souls with whom he trifled, the blood of Him who now sits as Judge was poured out like water. How will one look of that Judge wither his strength! Unreproved, unwarned, were dying sinners left to go on in their transgressions, and there stands the murderer who inflicted eternal death!

"He swore in sight of God

"And man to preach his Master, Jesus Christ,

"Yet preach'd himself; he swore that love of souls

"Alone had drawn him to the church, yet strewed

"The path that led to hell with tempting flowers;

"And in the ears of sinners, as they took

"The way to death, he whispered peace.

"He was a wolf in clothing of the lamb,

"That stole into the fold of God, and on

"The blood of souls, which he did sell to death,

"Grew fat."

Lift thy head, devoted minister of Jesus, from thy long-pressed pillow in the grave, and shout, for thy redemption is come!—While he sojourned on earth, he approved himself "in much patience, in affliction, in necessities, in distresses, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report,"—and now the vintage is come, and the fruits of his toils are to be gathered for eternal life; the award to be apportioned by the Master whom he conscientiously and devoutly served. The tenderness which distinguished the demeanor of the Saviour toward his disciples in his humiliation—those looks of familiar kindness—will still prevail above the rigid features of justice, as he says to the self-denying minister, I was an hungered and you gave me meat, thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you took me in, sick and in prison and you came unto me. No law of nature is more firmly fixed than the affection of Christ to his children. Suns may be extinguished and worlds annihilated, but the fire of redeeming love can never go out. Whether accused as a culprit at the bar of Pilate, or sitting as a judge to decide the destiny of the universe, whether mocked upon a cross or adored upon a throne, the Saviour's language to the daughter of Zion is,—thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. And on beholding the wounds in the hands, upon the temples, and in the side of his Redeemer, will not the approved minister of Christ, as he stands to be judged in the company of prophets, apostles, and martyrs, exclaim with



Thomas, in tones of overflowing love and gratitude, "My Lord and my God," when saw I thee an hungered and gave thee meat, or thirsty and gave thee drink, a stranger and took thee in, or sick and in prison and came unto thee? From domes of worldly pomp, the votaries of wealth and fame may look sarcastically down upon the unassuming pastor in his peregrinations from house to house, speaking of Jesus and his salvation, comforting the sick and the afflicted, sustaining the feeble hands and the tottering knees; but how will it be at the judgment day? Who will be regarded as the wise man then?

What a divine employment is the christian ministry! what an enviable character, a faithful ambassador of the Saviour! how sublime his motives, how heavenly his hopes! whether on his knees in his closet, or over his books in his study; whether urging the claims of God from the pulpit or at the firesides of his people, his labors have reference to results unseen and eternal—crowns of glory that fade not away, for himself and for others—religion his business, God his portion, his shield, his exceeding great reward.

And is the world's regeneration, under God, committed entirely to the ministry? Has the church nothing to do? In order to the success of the ministry, the co-operation of the friends of the Redeemer is indispensable. Without it, the hands of a pastor are comparatively weak. Nor do I here allude merely to a pecuniary competence, without which, of course, he cannot give himself wholly to his work. Such provision may be cheerfully made by a people, and yet assistance far more important be withheld.

Not a few who are accustomed to lead in social prayer-meetings, while almost every thing, from the river to the ends of the earth, is remembered, offer not a passing petition to God for their pastor; an omission it is to be feared resulting from a similar negligence in the closet; for what chiefly interests our minds in retirement will not be uniformly forgotten in public. How can a blessing be expected to follow the ministrations of the word, when the interest felt is too little to induce us to ask? Strange that the most efficient instrumentality appointed of God for saving sinners should be forgotten. With a view to call the attention of a negligent people to this duty, a pastor once preached from the text—"Brethren, pray for us." Before a week elapsed he had evidence in his own experience, that the evil had ceased. He was strengthened in the inner man; his heart was drawn out toward Zion; and the next Sabbath the people perceived, from the increased fervor in his public performances, that their supplications had been heard. Would to God that christians

knew how much they lose by not praying for their minister; selfishness itself would lead to a reform.

Christians moreover may help their minister by visiting and conversing from house to house. By these visits a variety of desirable objects, all connected with the pastor's work, may be accomplished. Destitute families may be supplied with the Bible; temperance pledges may be taken; children may be gathered into Sabbath-schools; such as neglect public worship may be induced to attend church; sinners may be arrested in their mad career to endless death, and brought to consideration, and, through the influences of the Holy Ghost, to repentance. The gospel-leaven is thus diffused through a community; and until each christian shall thus say to his neighbor and to his brother, "*know the Lord*,"—he will not be savingly known by all from the least to the greatest. Such christian effort, systematically and periodically performed, is the pastor's strength, the church's life, and, under God, the sinner's hope.

Above all things let a minister be sustained in doing his work *faithfully*. In the animadversions of worldly men against plain and cutting exhibitions of truth let members of the church never join. Ministers may doubtless err; but too much zeal, if well directed, for the salvation of souls, is hardly possible. While sinners remain unconverted—exposed to hell, put no damper upon the ardor of your minister. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, let him persuade men; let him lift up his voice like a trumpet, and spare not. Sinners have but one probation, and if that be neglected they are gone for ever. Whether they will hear or forbear, the whole truth, without disguise, must be proclaimed. Nay, though the professing disciples of Christ should cry, *hold*—as a minister of Christ, he must do his duty—fulfil his commission. An awful account has he to render; tempt him not to heal the hurt of the people slightly. No, brethren, help him to press the weapon home to the conscience; *all* is depending—eternity is at stake; 'tis but an hour, and every thing is lost or gained. But I forbear! Other duties might be specified; for indeed there is scarcely a department of labor where a pastor may not, either directly or indirectly, be aided by his church, or where aid is not needed.

In view of the tender relations of nature sustained by the speaker to the pastor elect,\* may I not be indulged in a few remarks of personal address?—My son, I meet you here to-day under circumstances next in interest to those which will exist at the judgment-seat of Christ. I know

\* Preached at the installation of a son.

and feel that I shall see you there. My one wish, paramount to all others respecting you, is that by a life of self-denying labor, you may there secure the approbation of your Judge. In recognizing you on this occasion as a minister of Jesus Christ, a thousand moving recollections rush over me. You were a child of many prayers. Lips now silent in the grave, at the midnight hour have implored the blessing of God, the unction of the Holy Ghost upon you; hearts now exulting before the throne in heaven have swelled with the desire that you might be called of God to the work in which you are engaged. I have watched over your steps with gratitude—for they were ever the steps of a dutiful son—from your infancy and childhood to this good hour, when I am permitted, through the blessing of the God of your fathers, to encounter you at the very point where all my earthly wishes respecting you centred. I had rather have you a humble minister of Jesus Christ, though poor and suffering, than to see you the occupant of a kingly throne. But what, my son, art thou, or what is thy father's house, that we should thus stand here to-day!—poor sinners, deserving of nothing but hell. Shall I call on you to honor the memory of your ancestors, who, for many generations, have been preachers of the Gospel? No—I call on you to be true to Christ, to give yourself wholly to your work. Yet remember, the cloud of witnesses who have gone before you, and have already attained the prize after which you aspire. Enoch, Noah, the prophets, the apostles, thousands of martyrs and reformers, Swartz, Brainerd, Elliot, (from the last of whom you are of lineal descent,) beckon you on to victory. Be a good soldier. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was himself a minister, has said, "Lo, I am with you alway, till the world shall end." Nail that promise to your heart, it will sustain you under every trial and difficulty, till you shall be summoned away to mingle in the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven. If we are engaged in our Master's business, how soon that summons comes it matters not. Death has once and again broken in upon our family group, and who may be next, God only knows. We are travelers here through a thorny maze, going home to our great and happy meeting. So run that you may win. The sentiments of this discourse I wish you to receive as addressed to yourself. In the ordinary course of events, you may be expected to continue to officiate as a minister when your parents shall be sleeping with the generations of their fathers. When the paternal lips that now address you shall be silent in death,—*meditate upon these things—give thyself wholly to them.*

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